

De : Andy Teucher
Envoyé : 8 octobre 2008 19:10
À : comments@suffieldreview.ca
Cc : <removed>
Objet : Opposition to EnCana's proposal to drill in SNWA

Dear panel members,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to, and urge the panel to reject, EnCana's proposal to drill 1275 shallow gas wells in the Suffield National Wildlife Area (SNWA) at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Suffield.

This is a protected area of global significance, containing one of the largest and last undisturbed vestiges of mixed-grass prairie in Canada. It also contains a large proportion of the Middle Sand Hills, a rare and unique ecosystem that supports an amazing array of species, including many that are at risk of extinction, several of which are found almost no-where else in Canada.

Several federally listed species at risk are afforded habitat protection in SNWA, and some of them benefit from this protection almost nowhere else. These include Tiny Cryptanthe, Ord's Kangaroo Rat, Small-flowered sand verbena, Western harvest mouse, and Great plains toad. I also must remind the panel that the federal government is legally required under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) to protect the critical habitat of these and other legally listed species.

I have had the rare privilege of spending a lot of time in the SNWA, as it was the site of my MSc research on the federally endangered Ord's kangaroo rat. I experienced firsthand the subtle beauty and the incredibly rich biodiversity that is found there, and also saw the impacts of the little development that has occurred. Most notably among these is the introduction of aggressive alien invasive plant species, which almost inevitably occur where ever vehicles have access. Compaction of fragile sandy soils, and alteration of species' habitat and movement patterns through the establishment of roads and trails also have many and varied consequences.

There are few places remaining today, particularly in the prairies, where one can stand on top of a hill or sand dune and look over an undisturbed tract of land stretching as far as the eye can see, with no roads or other human disturbance marring the view. Suffield is one of these places. It would be an absolute tragedy to sacrifice this virtually pristine landscape for the sake of a few more cubic feet of gas, which I understand would be recovered through existing infrastructure (simply at a slower pace than EnCana would like to, in order to enhance their already huge profits).

Finally, I must remind the panel that this is a National *Wildlife* Area, designated to protect "nationally significant habitat for migratory birds, support wildlife or ecosystems at risk, or represent rare or unusual wildlife habitat or a biogeographic region." (Environment Canada Website). The SNWA provides all of these services in spades, and allowing even a part of EnCana's proposal would severely undermine the ability of this

fragile ecosystem to continue to provide these functions; not to mention set a dangerous precedent for the rest of Canada's treasured protected areas system. Even responsible oil and gas extraction should not be allowed to occur in Suffield, and given EnCana's appalling track record operating in the area, we cannot expect them to meet even this low bar. Please reject EnCana's proposal and help to preserve Canada's natural legacy for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Andy Teucher